

## **Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 12th October, 2020.**

**Present:-** Councillors Swindlehurst (Chair), Akram (Vice-Chair), Anderson, Bains, Carter, Mann, Nazir and Pantelic

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors Gahir and Hulme

**Apologies for Absence:-** None.

### **PART 1**

#### **49. Declarations of Interest**

Item 8 – HRA Asset Management Plan Update: Councillor Swindlehurst declared that he had been appointed by the Council as a member of DISH and DISH RP. He stated he would stay and vote on the item.

Item 8 – HRA Asset Management Plan Update: Councillor Nazir declared that he had been appointed by the Council as a member of DISH and DISH RP. Councillor Nazir stayed and voted on the item.

Item 8 – HRA Asset Management Plan Update: Councillor Mann declared that she had been appointed by the Council as a member of DISH. Councillor Mann stayed and voted on the item.

#### **50. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th September 2020**

**Resolved –** That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

#### **51. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 – 2023/24**

The Director of Finance & Resources introduced a report that set out the plans for preparing a balanced budget for 2021/22 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2021/22 to 2023/24.

There were significant financial pressures and uncertainties on all local authorities, particularly arising from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council was continuing to manage the in-year pressures and recognised the material impact on the MTFS in future years. The issues faced included the costs to the Council of the emergency response; the loss of income and lower revised estimates of Council Tax and Business Rates revenues; the fact that some savings plans had become unachievable; and the anticipated higher demand for services in the future such as children's and adult social care.

The latest MTFS estimated that there would be a project cumulative budget gap of £17.9m by 2023/24. The report stated that whilst every effort would be made to protect services the level of savings required would impact on service

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levels in some areas and these would be carefully considered in the process of setting future budgets. It had been reported nationally and that several local authorities would be in severe financial difficulties, however, the Cabinet was provided assurance that Slough Borough Council was not in a financial position that would require a Section 114 notice to be considered. The Council had entered this period in a relatively good position, with a balanced MTFS approved in February 2020, as a result of strong financial management in previous years. Members supported the approach set out to close the future budget gap for example by managing costs, increasing efficiencies, identifying further savings and generating commercial income.

Lead Members noted the overall position and discussed several aspects of the report including the impact on reserves and the progress of discussions with the Department for Education regarding the funding position of Slough Children's Services Trust and the liability to the Council. It was responded that discussions were ongoing and the Department understood the Council's position. It was expected that further clarity would be provided in the next few weeks. In relation to reserves, it was noted that it was unlikely the strategy agreed by Council in February to grow the reserves would be able to be implemented in the short term. There were significant uncertainties about the anticipated rise in demand for services, future levels of government funding and the future shape of the pandemic and further reports would be provided to Members over the coming months as part of the budget process.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet noted the report.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the updated MTFS targets for 2021/22 – 2023/24 be noted.
- (b) That the need to set a balanced budget over the whole of the MTFS period be noted.
- (c) That the issues and actions set out in this report which are informing the development of the Council's MTFS be noted.

## **52. Community Investment Fund Update**

The Cabinet received a report that updated on the expenditure to date on the Community Investment Fund for the period to the end of September 2020.

The Appendix to the report set out the spending to date on a ward by ward basis. It was noted £613k of capital funding and £25k of revenue was still available to be allocated at the current time. Lead Members commented that a number of schemes were being delivered already such as the new green gyms funded this year and many more had funding committed. The Cabinet highlighted the importance of delivering the schemes identified by ward members in a timely manner and it was expected that councillors would be proposing further schemes in the coming months. Officers were asked to ensure that requests from Members to cost out potential schemes were

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completed quickly to ensure projects could be entered into the programme for delivery this year.

Lead Members commented that some projects agreed by Cabinet to be funded from underspends in previous years did not appear to be reflected in the Appendix. It was agreed that this should be clarified and all decisions previously made by Cabinet to fund specific schemes be carried forward and reflected in the next update.

The Cabinet had previously agreed funding for a number of projects from its allocation to address some of the emerging impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on Slough. These included more support for rough sleepers, unemployed residents and measures to promote social distancing. Lead Members proposed that the High Street social distancing signage be refreshed to increase public awareness of the continued need to maintain social distancing. Given the current budget pressures it was agreed that the Cabinet would not make any further allocations, but would keep some of its budget in reserve to address any specific issues arising from Covid-19 over the autumn that would be appropriate for CIF funding.

**Resolved** – That the expenditure to date from the Community Investment Fund 2020/21 be noted.

### **53. Carbon Management Plan 2020-2030**

The Environmental Quality Team Manager introduced a report that sought agreement to recommend the Carbon Management Plan 2020-30 to Council for approval.

The new plan took forward the work arising from the 2015-20 Carbon Management Plan and enacted the Council motion of 23rd July 2019 to develop a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The previous plan aimed to reduce carbon emissions by 20% against the 2013/14 baseline. The Council had achieved a 32.5% reduction through a range of projects such as LED street lighting, energy efficiency schemes, use of renewable energy and reduced vehicle use.

The new plan aimed to make the Council carbon neutral by 2030 and included four key outcomes:

- A 10% reduction in net carbon emissions per year through to 2030.
- A 100% reduction in net carbon emissions by 2030 against the 2018/19 baseline.
- A reduction of 10.5 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e to 0 tonnes per Full Time Equivalent employee by 2030.
- A revenue saving of over 10% over the lifetime of the plan in operating costs for the Council.

There were six priorities in the plan and these were summarised. The Lead Member for Sustainable Transport & Environmental Services explained that

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whilst the previous plans had been successful, the 2020 to 2030 plan was more ambitious and would require a significant amount of work across the Council to deliver. The Cabinet fully supported the plan and agreed to recommend approval to Council on 24th November 2020.

**Recommended –** That the Carbon Management Plan 2020-2030 be approved.

### **54. Heart of Slough - North West Quadrant - Community Site Update**

At the meeting on 15th June 2020 the Cabinet had approved the vision for the Heart of Slough North West Quadrant site and agreed that a masterplan should be progressed. A further report was considered that provided an update on the proposed community site and the cultural infrastructure strategy.

This strategy proposed an activity led, dispersed infrastructure model which invested in Council assets such as the Adelphi Theatre and The Venue @ The Curve rather than major capital investment in a new building on the site. The options appraisal indicated that such a facility would cost between £80m to £135m at a time when the authority faced financial pressures. It was recommended that an activity based approach that maximised existing assets and public space in the North West Quadrant was likely to achieve greater social outcomes with more modest investment.

It was noted that the report stated that the developers of Slough Central were also considering the creation of a cultural quarter to the rear of The Curve. The Officer informed the Cabinet of a statement from the developers that clarified that their proposals were at an early stage, would be subject to discussion and full business case review and that a cultural quarter may not come forward in the Slough Central scheme.

The Cabinet agreed that a dispersed strategy was the best approach as it would maximise the Adelphi and The Curve and encourage related leisure and cultural opportunities in the corridors between these facilities and wider town centre. The recommendations were agreed.

#### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the business planning and option review executive summary appended to the report be noted,
- (b) That it be agreed that the £50,000 budget approved by Cabinet in June would be repurposed to progress feasibility studies and option appraisals associated with existing Slough Borough Council assets that have potential for enhanced cultural utility,
- (c) That it be agreed that retaining circa a sixth of the North West Quadrant site for a large cultural building was not a financial priority for the Council at this present time and officers should seek to

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achieve more with less through an activity led cultural investment strategy focussed on existing SBC assets; and

- (d) That it be agreed that the incorporation of Higher Education space and an innovation hub were still strategic priorities and that officers should seek their inclusion within the larger development project being promoted by North West Quadrant LLP which will now comprise the whole of the North West Quadrant site.

### **55. Approval of Slough Local Plan Proposed Spatial Strategy for Public Consultation**

The Lead Member for Planning & Regulation and the Planning Policy Lead Officer introduced a report that sought approval of the proposed Spatial Strategy of the Slough Local Plan for public consultation in November and December 2020.

The Government had set a target for all Local Planning Authorities to adopt a Local Plan by the end of 2023. Slough had been working on its plan for some time but it had been unable to progress through the formal stages due to the uncertainty of Heathrow Airport expansion. As it was now very unlikely that the proposal for a third runway would come forward in the short term Slough would proceed with the plan on the basis that any new proposals for Heathrow could be dealt with in a review.

The draft Spatial Strategy had been considered by the Planning Committee, Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Member briefings prior to being presented to Cabinet. The strategy formed a key part of the Local Plan development for Slough and set out the proposed pattern and scale of development.

The five key components of the strategy were summarised:

- delivering major comprehensive redevelopment within the “Centre of Slough”;
- selecting other key locations for appropriate sustainable development, such as the trading estates;
- enhancing our distinct suburbs, vibrant neighbourhood centres and environmental assets;
- protecting the "strategic gap between Slough and Greater London; and
- promoting the cross-border expansion of Slough to meet unmet housing needs.

There had been a slight delay in the proposed consultation and it was noted that it was now expected to start on 9th November and be open until 21st December. The consultation mechanism would be digital given the Covid-19 restrictions. The Local Plan timetable would be that there would be a separate consultation on the Green Belt in 2021, a draft Local Plan in 2022 and examination and adoption in 2023.

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Lead Members discussed various aspects of the strategy and highlighted the importance of this phase of the Local Plan. The strategy was very important in setting out the pattern and scale of future development, anticipated future growth and linked to transport and other infrastructure plans. The strategy would then inform the planning policies.

The Cabinet agreed the recommendation that the strategy should go out the public consultation and encouraged residents and interested parties to participate and contribute their views.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the Slough Local Plan Proposed Spatial Strategy Consultation Document in Appendix A be agreed.
- (b) That a six week public consultation exercise should be held beginning on 9th November 2020 be agreed.
- (c) That delegated powers be given to the Council's Planning Policy Lead Officer, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulation, to make minor changes to the Consultation Document and proposed public consultation exercise.

## **56. HRA Asset Management Strategy Update - Affordable Housing Development**

The Lead Member for Housing & Community Safety and the Service Lead Housing Development & Contracts introduced a report that updated on the progress of delivering the HRA Asset Strategy approved in April 2018, particularly the Housing Development Programme.

The ambitious programme aimed to deliver significant new affordable housing in Slough. There were a total of 86 sites in the HRA Development Programme and the progress was set out fully in Appendix A to the report. There was a long term strategy in place and in the short term it was aimed to deliver 473 units through planning to construction in the next 18 months. There was innovation in the programme in the use of the DISH RP, institutional financing, efficient of design and the model of procurement. The Officer gave a presentation that highlighted the progress of several exemplar schemes including the London Road Gateway Project, the Chalvey Extra Care scheme and the Broom House former garage site. The report set out the next steps on how the programme would be taken forward.

The Cabinet welcomed the progress that had made to increase the supply of affordable homes in Slough. The Council had made significant investment in this area, through vehicles such as James Elliman Homes, and progress was set to continue to gather pace in the coming years. The recommendations were reviewed and agreed by the Cabinet.

**Resolved –**

- (a) Delegate to the Director of Finance & Resources, following consultation with Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety, authority to dispose the assets listed in Appendix A, including disposals to be made at less than market value to the 'Development Initiative Slough Homes Registered Provider (DISH RP) for provision of affordable housing on the assets listed in Appendix A
- (b) Delegate to the Director of Finance & Resources, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety and with advice of the Service Lead for Housing Development & Community Safety, authority to transfer and enter into leasebacks of the assets in Appendix A if such conveyancing structures facilitate the development of affordable housing
- (c) Approve the delegation of authority to the Director of Finance & Resources following consultation with Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety with advice of Service Lead for Housing Development and Contracts to consent to supporting DISH RP in provision of conditional supporting loan from the HRA, available retained 1-4-1 right to buy receipts, submit applications for and enter into grant agreements from Homes England with warranties in place acting as guardian guarantor for institutional finance. The condition is that the DISH RP delivers for the provision of affordable housing supported by localised allocation agreements.
- (d) Delegate authority to the Director of Finance & Resources following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety to make all necessary arrangements (including the entry into loan and other financing agreements) for up to £90m to be loaned to the DISH RP over the next 5 years on terms that require the DISH RP to develop and/or deliver the affordable housing as set out in appendix D.
- (e) Delegate authority to the Director of Finance & Resources following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety to facilitate, by means of financial or other guarantees or such other financial or other support considered to be reasonably necessary and in the best interests of the Council, the provision of Institutional Finance arrangement to be taken out by DISH RP.
- (f) Note the annual update to the HRA Asset Management Strategy in Appendix B, noting the update is part of the Housing Strategy. Cabinet further delegates authority to the Director of Place & Development with advice from the Service Lead for Housing Development and Contracts following consultation with Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety to implement and deliver the strategy.
- (g) Delegate authority to the Director of Finance & Resources following consultation with Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety

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with advice of Service Lead for Housing Development and Contracts to procure, or use of available framework if established if better value for money services that will achieve; a detailed survey of Asbestos, establish Carbon neutral and building safety act initiatives, investment required to achieve compliance to meet regulatory and statutory standards. That HRA Capital funding for 2020/21 has identified capacity to assign a budget of £1.8m for the required range of detailed surveys.

- (h) Delegate authority to the Director of Finance & Resources following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety to seek consent from the Secretary of State to transfer by appropriate leaseback arrangements with DISH RP the properties identified by postcode in Appendix C by the Asset Performance Evaluation those properties identified as requiring a level of investment for repair and compliance with regulation that are or shall be a burden to the HRA, will be presented with individual business cases to the Section 151 Officer for approval.

### 57. Covid-19 Decisions Update

The Cabinet received a report that summarised the significant decisions taken by Officers since the previous meeting in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ratification was sought of two decisions relating to strengthening local contact tracing capacity to supplement the national system and the updated Covid-19 Risk Register. The Cabinet ratified the executive decisions taken.

**Resolved** – That the Significant Decisions as set out in Appendix A to the report be endorsed.

### 58. References from Overview & Scrutiny

The Cabinet considered reference report from the Neighbourhoods & Community Services (NCS) Scrutiny Panel from 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 with regard to Food Poverty in Slough. The panel had established a Task & Finish Group which had produced a comprehensive report and series of recommendations for the Cabinet to consider.

The Chair of the NCS Panel, Councillor Hulme, summarised the Task & Finish Group report and recommendations. It was recognised that the issue of food poverty in Slough was wide ranging and complex, and would require joint working within the Council and between partner agencies to tackle the problem effectively. The recommendations were as follows:

1. “Develop a commitment and a proactive strategy to tackle food poverty in Slough Borough Council.
2. Create a directory of (and promote) all available services.
3. Start to monitor household food insecurity.



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4. Coordinate with schools to ensure all children have access to food 365 days a year.
5. Explore ways to reduce fuel poverty using regulatory tools such as the Housing Act 2004 and through the effective promotion of the various energy company obligation schemes already in operation in Slough.
6. Increase the capacity of the LWP team and provide customer service training.
7. Support & develop financial advice services.\
8. Develop community orchards and plant fruit trees around the borough.
9. Engage retailers and voluntary groups.
10. Consider more collaboration with probation services.
11. Improve working conditions and opportunities for Slough residents.
12. Organise an annual conference on food poverty.”

The Cabinet welcomed the report and strongly commended the panel and the officers who had supported it for the work that had been undertaken. Lead Members highlighted that food poverty was rightly an important local priority and there were clear linkages to the work of the Slough Wellbeing Board and emerging future Skills Hubs which aimed to provide job opportunities for residents and help to tackle one of the root causes of food poverty.

Each recommendation was considered in turn and it was recognised that some could be delivered relatively quickly, whereas others with higher cost or a wider impact on Council services would need more detailed consideration. For example the recommendations relating to local welfare provision and financial advice services could be considered through Phase 2 of the Our Futures programme and Customer Experience Strategy. Members may decide to use CIF funding to support certain initiatives.

The Cabinet decided that recommendations 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 and 12 should be agreed and actioned, noting that the specific mechanisms may be revised e.g. the annual conference proposed in recommendation 12 may be better achieved by similar means such as an annual summit. The other recommendations would require more detailed work to understand the service and financial implications and this should be considered through the Phase 2 Our Futures programme and the budget setting process. Lead Members asked that an update be provided to the Cabinet on progress of delivery within six months.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the recommendations of the Food Poverty Task & Finish Group be welcomed.
- (b) The Cabinet accepted recommendations 1,2, 3, 8, 9, 10 and 12 and agreed that further work should be carried out to establish how to take forward the other recommendations where there were more significant financial and service implications.

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### **59. Notification of Key Decisions**

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Key Decisions published on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020 which set out the key decisions expected to be taken by Cabinet over the next three months.

**Resolved –** That the published Notification of Key Decisions for the period between October and December 2020 be endorsed.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.46 pm)